

# Board Special Meeting

2445 – 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue South, Seattle WA 98134



Board Special Meeting: BTA IV Levy,  
Resolution on Elementary Out-of-School Suspensions Moratorium  
Wednesday, September 16, 2015, 4:30 PM – 7:30 PM  
Auditorium, John Stanford Center

## Minutes

The meeting was called to order at 4:35pm. All Directors were present. Associate Superintendent of Facilities & Operations Flip Herndon, Capital Projects Director Richard Best, and Chief Information Officer Carmen Rahm staffed the meeting.

Dr. Herndon led the discussion, beginning by noting that the district is on the schedule as presented in earlier discussions with the Board. Staff is bringing back considerable information this evening. He said staff is looking specifically to the Board for guidance concerning the levy priorities and amounts that can be presented at a series of community meetings later this month for feedback. Plans also include making the presentation to the BEX Oversight Committee, then returning to the full Board in October to describe feedback received.

## Buildings

Discussion followed surrounding the 5-10 year enrollment projections and the Buildings, Technology, and Academics/Athletics (BTA) IV Capital Levy Proposed Project Summary Sheet. These documents informed the conversation about the how to address capacity needs and the potential size of the levy. The 5-10 year enrollment documents note the year buildings are coming on-line and the added seat capacity. Richard Best reviewed the format and content of the BTA IV Capital Levy Proposed Project Summary Sheet and noted that all cost estimates were priced to June 30, 2015. Dr. Herndon said the project list has been guided by discussions in Board committees and work sessions; he distributed lists of BTA III projects promised and delivered as well as projects considered for BTA III and BEX IV that were not included in final levy requests. Board members asked for better visual pieces for the enrollment information that will accompany the project summary sheet out to the community. Other input included:

- Support for setting some dollars aside for property acquisition to help with capacity management issues, allowing the district to move more quickly as needed.
- Concern about spending significant money on Mercer Middle School without gaining any capacity but instead looking for ways to increase capacity at middle schools.
- Creating an educational specifications (ed specs) for middle schools (looking at Mercer and Washington), as well as an ed specs for Lincoln High School and a potential downtown high school. As to criteria for ed specs, Dr. Herndon shared principal concern about schools larger than 1,000 students, while Board members said the overarching assignment for the district is growing capacity. If the district is at a mid-point in leveraging money, one of the most compelling arguments for increasing the levy is to declare the district is adding seats, taking advantage of property the district has; if the district cannot get ahead of the growth, staff will be managing overcrowded schools.
- Support for an addition to Ingraham High School to add 500 seats; this is in addition to the opening of Lincoln High School. Richard Best said the addition would be going up to three stories. Looking down the road to a new high school, Dr. Herndon said staff is traveling to the east coast to visit a high school that has a stadium on the rooftop and other locations for high schools in urban settings.

- The maintenance backlog would be reduced from \$340 million at the end of BTA III and BEX IV to around \$246 million by the end of BTA IV. In response to Board member questions on how or when the current district process fits with the lifecycle planning model presented, Richard Best said the district is moving toward the use of this model at the beginning of projects but recognizes there are still older buildings needing repair.

## **Technology**

Carmen Rahm started the discussion about technology by noting that data is the whole purpose of the information system, and the Department of Technology Services (DoTS) has a goal of getting data to principals, teachers, and district leadership. He noted teachers are teaching with older technology and hand-me-down equipment, and the district relies on levy funding for day-to-day technology support. He said the department has 14 people to support district systems, while national standards indicate that the district should have 40-45 staff. This impacts the quality of customer service to buildings. He reviewed the three levels of technology funding requests presented and where each level would get the district to.

Lengthy discussion followed on the definition of equitable access to technology and the kind of equipment needed:

- While some districts have a tablet for every student, Mr. Rahm noted that an iPad is not accessible for testing. The district goal is to get to a 1:1 ratio with the right technology. The concern is for the inequities that exist for students who do not have internet access at home.
- The BTA IV request will not get the district to that 1:1 ratio. District plans would be to start in middle schools, but it is a huge endeavor to support, and in four years the district would start a replacement cycle.
- Board members and staff agreed that technology for technology's sake is not the issue and discussed international studies that said technology did not actually improve student achievement. It is what instructors do with it and how the district can support that benefit, mapping out how to get staff trained. Mr. Rahm said the critical issue for progress is to have better technology in the hands of teachers, with audio-visual equipment in the classrooms and teacher training
- Board members commented on the need to have an incredible level of sophisticated support, where every building would need a technologist for both students and staff, so that equipment does not just sit idle. Mr. Rahm talked about surrounding districts that also take advantage of student support.
- Concern was expressed at where the district is relative to data and system security and felt that investing money there would be wise; security chips in badges, secure servers, and good virus protection were mentioned.
- In responding to Board member questions about providing equipment that students could take home, or having students able to bring their personal equipment for use at school, Mr. Rahm said that the 1:1 model at school would be the best, as struggling parents cannot afford internet access. He said the level of support needed to provide the virus and software supports of students using their own devices would far outweigh any savings.

## **Academics/Athletics**

Dr. Herndon reviewed the Priority 1 \$35 million request, which includes academic projects for student assessment, Special Education and Core 24 graduation requirements, and program placement, as well as working on the continuing list of athletic fields and exterior lights requests.

## **Discussion on priorities and balancing the BTA IV request**

Dr. Herndon said that the district is looking at a combined operations levy and BTA IV that will exceed \$1 billion and asked Board members for their thoughts on what level BTA IV should be. Comments included:

- Disappointment about the level of Priority 1 technology requests, as the district should be leveraging on-line college and other learning programs to ensure all students can succeed.
- Support for the \$169 million technology version to get up to current standards for the use of technology in education. Equity issues will be huge.
- Concern about the other requests coming before Seattle voters and taxpayers, like the \$900 million transportation levy. Being a little more skeptical of technology being the only answer, and having the BTA IV levy not exceed \$500 million.
- Acknowledging that the want list always exceeds the amount of money the district should ask for.
- Board members supported the idea of a Technology Oversight Committee modeled after the BEX Oversight Committee to help the district evaluate and monitor implementation of technology.
- Board members supported an earlier comment about aggressively pursuing partnerships with businesses to help with the many families that do not have internet access.
- The district will be going out to the community for feedback and have discussions with levy supporters to assist in the final decision on how much to ask for.

In trying to balance everything on the list, Board members expressed support for the Priority 1 list, using building dollars to increase capacity, tackling the backlog of building maintenance, increasing technology in the range of \$10-15 million, not going above \$500 million, and being able to clearly demonstrate the plan to the community.

The meeting recessed at 6:10pm and reconvened at 6:17pm.

### **Work Session: Resolution on Elementary Out-of-School Suspensions Moratorium**

All Directors were present. Staff present was Superintendent Larry Nyland, Associate Superintendent for Teaching & Learning Michael Tolley, Executive Director of Coordinated School Health Pat Sander, Director of School, Family Partnerships, and Race/Equity Bernardo Ruiz, and Rainier View Elementary Principal Anitra Pinchback-Jones.

#### **What Data Says**

Michael Tolley provided an overview of tonight's work session, including the data gathered in 2013-14 on closing the opportunity gaps and the African-American students' suspension and expulsion rate.

#### **Goals and Measurements**

Bernardo Ruiz spoke about the work done with principals to eliminate disproportionalities.

#### **Action Plan**

Mr. Ruiz noted the importance of building strong partnerships with communities and families in the District, and spoke about the three targeted strategies for initial focus.

#### **Targeted Strategies**

Pat Sander provided an overview of this topic. Directors spoke about the importance to clearly define a problem in relation to the theory in action model on slide 13 and Supt. Nyland spoke about how the strategies will delve down to the specific areas and the areas would identify where there would be the greatest opportunities for growth. Directors commented on the need to look at the root causes of problems related to the suspension/expulsion rate of Black/African-American students, which may be a sensitive topic. Ms. Sander spoke about the need to set the right conditions in place so students can be successful and to look at the framework to see what staff needs to be addressing at the school sites and at the District in general. Directors asked about slides #14 & 15, whether the targeted strategies are proposed or current practices. Ms. Sander noted there are some schools that have practiced the strategies, but there isn't a system-wide infrastructure for them. Directors and staff discussed the collection of data to see what the underlying reasons are for the expulsions and suspensions and the need to put data in the right context. Directors commented on how discipline is currently being used and noted data shows a school that has a higher level of suspension/expulsion happens to be in a particular

region and with students of color. Directors spoke about how the resolution focuses on elementary schools, noting if students are suspended in elementary schools then there is a tendency for them to get suspended in middle schools, and so forth. Directors spoke about the need to move forward with this work to help close the opportunity gaps.

### **Current Suspension Data**

Ms. Sander provided an overview of the 2014-15 suspension data. Directors spoke about the three codes for short-term District offenses that are most frequently used to justify suspending and expelling students. Directors also noted the number of short-term suspensions for kindergarteners is 61 and asked what these kids did that could warrant a suspension.

### **Options**

Ms. Sander provided an overview on the proposed options for closing the opportunity gaps. Michael Tolley noted there is also a handout on the pros and cons of the three options.

### **Decision Variables**

Principal Pinchback-Jones provided an overview of the decision variables slide. She spoke about the need to take action starting with the proposed action plan, noting there is an immediate need to start this school year implementing the Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS) for all teachers, students and families. Principal Pinchback-Jones spoke the benefits of providing real-time support to teachers and school staff as they build positive relationships with students. She also noted the need to look into how we build our students to look at self-discipline around the theme of respect and responsibility, and what it means to be respectful and respected as a teacher, staff members, students and families. Directors thanked staff for their work and asked whether slide #22 referred to non-violent offenses and staff confirmed it was non-violent offenses. Directors asked about the current practice in place for students who have committed violent offenses. Ms. Sander noted there will be a plan to look at the behavioral piece with the student and family. Director Martin-Morris noted he would like to edit the resolution to clarify that the resolution is for elementary grade students for District Offenses D-110 (Disruptive Conduct), D-120 (Rule Breaking), D-130 (Disobedience), beginning in 2015-16 and a proposal to develop a districtwide system to further reduce out of school suspensions for all grades. Directors and staff discussed the involvement of teachers in conversations around strategies on disproportionality and how the District handles student bullying. Directors commented on their selection of an option.

The meeting adjourned at 7:20pm.

Director Carr announced that the Board was going into a closed session, as allowed by RCW 42.30.140.